



# & Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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## Seize the chances of Tory chaos

# LABOUR CAN STOP BREXIT

With the Tories in trouble — even more trouble after Donald Trump told them that their Brexit plan would block a trade deal with the USA — an active Left Against Brexit campaign has a real chance of shifting the axis of debate.

Many people oppose Brexit. The demonstration on 23 June for a “people’s vote” on whatever final deal the Tories produce drew over 100,000 people. Opinion polls now show a slight but fairly stable anti-Brexit majority.

But so far the themes of workers’ unity across Europe, free movement, migrant rights, and the potential to fight for social and democratic levelling-up across Europe, have not got enough airtime.

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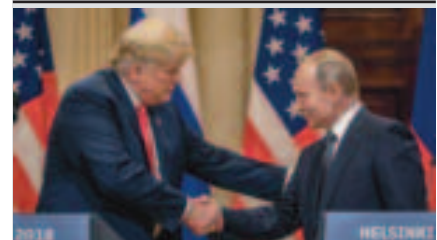
**Campaign with The Left Against Brexit: [www.anothereurope.org/tour](http://www.anothereurope.org/tour)**

**BOLLOCKS  
TO BREXIT**  
IT'S NOT A DONE DEAL  
#bollockstobrex

# FOR THE MANY NOT THE FEW

**BOLLOCKS  
TO BREXIT**

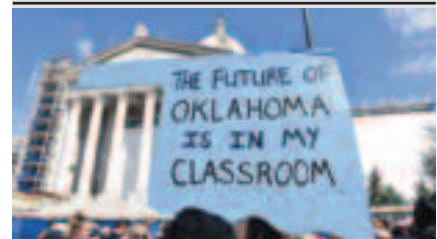
## Inside:



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Matt Cooper reports on Trump’s visit to Europe and Russia, and what characterises his domestic and foreign policy.

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Socialist and teacher trade unionist Lois Weiner spoke to *Solidarity* and the *Labour Days* podcast.

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### Labour, crime and policing

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## Join Labour!

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# How the German state let Nazis get away with murder

By Dale Street

**A Munich court announced its verdicts last week at the end of the five-year long NSU (National-Socialist Underground) trial.**

Beate Zschäpe, the only surviving member of the Neo-Nazi “NSU trio”, was sentenced to life imprisonment for her role in the ten murders, three bombings and 15 armed robberies carried out by the NSU between 2000 and 2007.

Zschäpe had claimed that she had known nothing of the activities carried out by Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt, the two other members of the trio who had committed suicide after a botched robbery in 2011.

A neo-Nazi all her adult life, Zschäpe claimed — unsuccessfully — that she had merely lived with Mundlos and Böhnhardt.

Ralf Wohlleben, a former official of the neo-Nazi NPD who had helped supply the weapon used in nine of the murders, was given a ten-year sentence. Two other defendants who had provided various forms of assistance to the trio received three-year sentences.

To cheers from a dozen black-shirted neo-Nazis in the public gallery, André Eminger was sentenced to two-and-a-half years. An arrest warrant against him dating from last September was also revoked, allowing him to leave the courtroom as a free man (for the time being).

Eminger has the words “Die, Jew, Die” tattooed across his stomach. He was described by his own solicitors as “a National-Socialist through and through”. He wore a jumper bearing the insignia of a Neo-Nazi heavy metal band during the trial.

Eminger provided more assistance to the trio and for a longer period of time than any other defendant. But the court concluded that he had not necessarily been aware of the terrorist activities.

After the announcement of the



Centre, Beate Zschäpe, one of the NSU trio.

verdicts and sentences 5,000 protesters joined a demonstration in Munich called by No Closure, an umbrella organisation which brings together local groups including NSU-Watch and the Munich Alliance against Nazi Terror and Racism.

Over a thousand demonstrated in Berlin, 800 in Hamburg, 300 in Rostock, and several hundreds in spontaneous demonstrations in Kiel, Bremen and Frankfurt.

The leniency of Eminger’s sentence was one of the demonstrations’ themes. But this was overshadowed by the slogans “The NSU was not just three” and “No Closure”. In other words:

- The trio must have been part of a much larger neo-Nazi network.
- Despite being the longest-ever trial of right-wing terrorism in German history, the courtroom proceedings failed to answer, or even address, many of the basic questions thrown up by the history of the trio.

**EAST GERMANY**  
Zschäpe, Mundlos and Böhnhardt grew up in Jena in former East Germany. Unemployed teenagers at the time of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and German re-unification, they were attracted by the then resurgent

far-right and neo-Nazi movements.

They attended far-right pop concerts, clashed at weekends with local left-wing punks, visited Buchenwald wearing SS uniforms which they had made for themselves, and invented a board game (“Pogromly”) in which points were awarded for sending Jews to concentration camps.

In the mid-1990s they joined the Thuringian Home Guard, a semi-military neo-Nazi organisation. The head of its Jena group was Ralf Wohlleben. Faced with the likelihood of a state ban in the late 1990s, the organisation “colonised” and took over the NPD in Thuringia.

By that time Zschäpe, Mundlos and Böhnhardt had already gone underground. In 1998 the police had raided a garage which the three of them had rented and discovered explosives, bomb-making materials and a large amount of antisemitic literature.

But the three did not live really “underground”. They used false identity papers, but otherwise lived entirely public lives.

It is not credible that they could have led such lives, as well as having ready access to the weapons and explosives needed for their murders, bombings and robberies, without the support of a much broader organised network.

Other material found by the police in the flat in Zwickau where they had lived underlines the fact that the trio belonged to a broader network.

A list of ten thousand names from all over Germany was found in the flat. Apart from ethnic-minority, mainly Turkish, individuals, the list also included the addresses of offices of political parties, mosques, Turkish cultural associations, synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, and asylum-seeker hostels.

The size of the list, its spread over the entire country, and the details recorded against individual names rule out the list being the work of three individuals acting on their own.

And the murders and bombings themselves could not have been carried out by three lone individuals.

The victims were ethnic minority shop and snackbar owners (mainly of Turkish origin, but also Turkish-Kurdish and one Greek). In many

cases, it would have been impossible to identify the shop or snackbar owner — or even the location of their businesses — without personal observation.

The murders and bombings were variously committed in Nuremberg, Hamburg, Munich, Rostock, Cologne, Dortmund and Kassel.

Three individuals in Zwickau, supposedly living in the underground, could not have obtained the local knowledge needed for such murders and bombings without assistance.

## NO CLOSURE

**The network of support on which Zschäpe, Mundlos and Böhnhardt must have relied raises questions about the role of the state authorities: the BfV (Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution) and the police. Hence the demand for “No Closure”.**

Both the BfV and the police had a network of informers in the neo-Nazi milieu. But both authorities claim that they had no knowledge of the activities or location of the trio.

Thomas Starke provided Zschäpe, Mundlos and Böhnhardt with the explosives found in the Jena garage in 1998 and then helped them go “underground”. From 2000 he was a police informer.

Stephan Lange was a leading figure in the neo-Nazi “Blood and Honour” organisation. The NSU trio were linked politically to “Blood and Honour”, and were personally friends with Lange. He was an informer for both the BfV and the police.

Ralf Marschner, a singer in the neo-Nazi West-Saxon Riff-Raff skinhead band, was Zwickau’s most prominent neo-Nazi. He lived round the corner from the trio and provided two of them with jobs in his firm. He was a BfV informer between 2000 and 2002.

BfV informer Andreas Temme was present when one of the NSU victims was murdered. He claimed that he had not heard the shots (as a silencer had been used) and had not seen the blood on the counter or the corpse behind the counter when leaving.

When the existence of the NSU finally became known in November 2011 the BfV immediately shredded the files of seven of its neo-Nazi informers.

When one of several federal-state government inquiries into the NSU requested a copy of the BfV file for Marschner, it was told that the file had been destroyed in a flood.

And the Hessen BfV, which covers the scene of the internet café murder, has imposed a 120-year ban on revealing the contents of an internal report on the links between local neo-Nazis and the NSU.

Apart from a police officer killed in 2007 — the reasons for which remain a mystery even after the trial — all NSU victims were Turks/Turkish Kurds, and a Greek.

They were all killed with the same weapon. And all had been shot repeatedly at close range.

But for years the police consistently refused to attribute a racist motive to the crimes. Instead, throughout the six years of the nine murders, the police attributed them to mafia or gangland killings in the Turkish community, or to Turkish community wars over turfs for drug-dealing.

Police tried to persuade the widow of the first NSU victim that her husband had been connected to the Turkish mafia. When that failed, they invented a story that he had been having an affair with another woman, in the belief that would provoke his widow into admitting his criminal ties.

The family of another NSU victim, Mehmet Kubasik, was questioned about his possible links to drug-dealing, the mafia or the PKK, and their home was searched for evidence of such non-existent links.

The Greek victim’s widow was told that her husband’s absences from home were due to visits to brothels in Frankfurt. The police claimed that he had a secret lover. They even demanded she admit to the murder of her husband.

The name given to the task force eventually set up to investigate the murders summed up the thinking of the police: Bosphorus. More perjoratively, the murders were referred to as the “kebab murders”.

The Nuremberg police even went as far as setting up a fake kebab stall, in the belief that that would lure out the Turkish mafia supposedly behind the killings.

When witnesses reported seeing white Caucasians “of Eastern European appearance” fleeing the scenes of the crimes on bikes, and suggestions began to be raised that there could be a racist motive for the killings, one police chief responded: “Have you ever seen a Nazi on a bike?”

(For murders and bank robberies alike, Mundlos and Böhnhardt used bikes for their getaways.)

Even as late as 2007, after all NSU murders had been committed, the Criminal Investigations Office issued a statement claiming that the murders must have been committed by people who did not share German cultural values:

“Given that killing human beings is considered highly taboo within our cultural space, we can safely assume that the perpetrator is, in terms of his behavioral system, located far outside our local system of values and norms.”

The trial delivered verdicts on the five defendants, although Zschäpe has already announced her intention of appealing.

**But the trial failed to confront was the institutional racism of the German state authorities which effectively allowed the NSU a free run for seven years — and which allows the same approach to the NSU’s successors and co-thinkers today.**



## Tel Aviv marches against discriminatory law

**Thousands protested on 14 July in Tel Aviv against the Nation State Bill, which passed into law on 16 July.**

**The bill further enshrines the Jewish character of Israel while undermining democratic rights for minorities. The law has been widely opposed in Israel and by Jewish groups outside Israel on the grounds that it will downgrade the status of Arabic as the language of a large Israeli minority, make ethnic segregation easier, and will bolster discrimination against Israeli Arabs and other minority populations.**



# The answer to Trump: rebuild working-class organisation

By Matt Cooper

**July saw the one-man circus that is President Donald Trump smear its rancid trail across Europe.**

Most eye-catching was Trump's support for the anti-immigrant racism of the European populist right. He re-told the standard cultural racist narrative to the *Sun*, saying that immigration had "changed the fabric" of the continent "I think you are losing your culture."

Trump also continued his ongoing attacks on London Mayor Sadiq Khan saying, "Take a look at the terrorism that is taking place. Look at what is going on in London. I think he has done a very bad job on terrorism", with the clear implication that this is because Khan is Muslim.

The left's response to Trump has been one of righteous anger focusing on this racism while seeming less sure on Trump's broader policies, particular his escalating trade war.

Typical was Owen Jones writing in the *Guardian* that "movements and elite politicians across the western world have attempted to scapegoat migrants, refugees and Muslims for unemployment and job insecurity, stagnating living standards and decimated public services. Conveniently, their racist deflections have been accompanied by policies that favour the wealthy and big business."

While it is right to highlight the nature of Trump's racism and its

continuity with more mainstream parties, the left's understanding of Trump needs to go further.

Trump is not a straight-forward representative of big business. Big capital tended to favoured Hilary Clinton in 2016, although it should be no surprise that the owners of many small businesses in the US supported Trump. He wasn't even the favoured candidate of big business for the Republican nomination.

Like much of the populist right, Trump is a symptom of the inability of the capitalist class to find continuing support for their neo-liberal globalising agenda.

This was not only the policy of the right, but of the "third way" of Bill Clinton in the US and Blair in Britain. The New Right amalgam of neo-liberalism with neo-conservative populist emollients of law and order, racism and family values always had tensions within it. With the populist right the two parts of the equation are now in open warfare. Increasingly the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis has made it hard to build an electoral programme around there being no alternative to accepting the power of global free trade.

Thus, domestically Trump offers pro-business policies of tax breaks and deregulation. But on international trade policy he is hostile to the old free-trade mantras of the (old) New Right and Third Way instead favouring an anti-market nationalism.

He has been aided by the proliferation of broadcast and internet channels which reduce the author-



**250,000 people marched in London against Trump as he visited the UK. Home-made signs mingled with left political placards in this fantastic show of solidarity with US migrants and others.**

itative power of the big media outlets, although Trump's favoured Fox News is owned by Murdoch and Breitbart was supported by Robert Mercer (worth around \$100 million).

The internet while diffusing power is also a medium where money (or state power) can buy influence. Yet it has made political ideology unstable and allowed the reinforcement of alternative narratives such as Trump's. Political disillusionment in the post-2008 world has allowed more people to take the "red pill" and buy into ideas such as those represented by Trump.

Trump's impulsive tweeting and

scale of lying (the *Washington Post* puts the count of 5.9 a day) exists in this increasingly uncentred media.

Hence Trump's general approach of contradictory pronouncements. His Art of the Deal playbook is to be unpredictable, because being predictable empowers the opposition. His frequent volte-faces are not accidents but underscored by his desire to disrupt, particularly existing patterns of trade which he seeks to reform in America's interest. Nowhere is this disruption more intensively focused than on the Trump's foreign relations as witnessed by protean pronouncements on Brexit.

Trump keeps his White House

team divided into factions to heighten his control. Domestic policy is divided between right-wing Republicans and Wall Street deregulators, but in international policy there is a strong reliance on the military and intelligence establishment (sometimes seen as the US "deep state").

Trump's trade war is not only an attempt to appeal to his working-class base in declining industries, but may also be a reflection of the views of this group. The Trump administration claims that trade policy against China and the EU is motivated by national security. This may not simply be an attempt to circumvent WTO rules but reflect the fear that the US's dominant position in geo-political order is under threat.

Chinese appropriation of US technology weakens American advantage and undermines US military supply chains. It seems plausible that the military-intelligence establishment are willing to accept the harm that protectionist policies will cause the US economy for maintaining relative advantage.

Ultimately, the alternative to Trump will not be built by opposition to his racism alone, essential as that is. The void that Trump has filled was, in part at least, created by the defeat of the working class in the 1980s and decline in socialist ideas.

**Rebuilding working-class organisation and a through renewal of socialist ideas are the answer to Trump.**

## Football is a sport, and is neither progressive nor reactionary

By Omar Raii

**Knowing all the words to an aria by Puccini or being obsessed with the poems of Chaucer are much less likely to invite political analysis onto its possible progressive or reactionary implications than supporting a football team in the World Cup does.**

And it would be silly to ignore the at least superficially progressive or inspiring things that come about every four years when a World Cup is on.

This time we saw countries whose football teams have historically been laughing stocks doing incredibly well thanks to their immigrant players — think Belgium or Switzerland.

We saw small countries like Iceland that are typically ignored on the world stage being seen as equals to the likes of Argentina. Their nation was so enthused a reported 10% of Iceland's entire population was in Russia for the Cup.

We see schoolchildren learn where Senegal and Uruguay are, and perhaps a bit about those countries. (In fact, football is a great way to learn a bit of basic geography; I know plenty of football fans who

care nothing for politics but know exactly where Östersund or Borisov are because they've been to away matches there, while plenty of my socialist friends would struggle to point to those cities on a map).

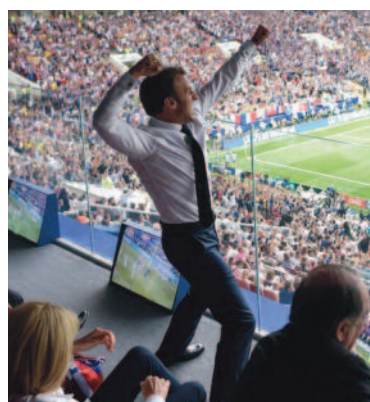
And of course when we see hundreds of thousands of often working-class football fans in a stadium, it's hard not to think that the left could do more to reach out to such a huge potential audience.

But we shouldn't ignore the nationalism that always pervades huge sporting events; and it is pretty much wholly reactionary.

No matter how many liberal commentators in the *Guardian* drone on about how uplifting it is to see sport unifying the country (invariably this comes from people who would never even dream of turning up on a November Saturday to see, say, Norwich City v. Ipswich Town), there is no progressive content to singing God Save the Queen and flag-waving.

It is very easy for nationalists to use football as a vehicle for their chauvinism and reactionary symbol and socialists can't run away from criticising that.

But supporting a team, for what-



**Macron: ridiculously enthusiastic**

ever arbitrary reason, whether it's because you happen to live in England, or because you hate that everyone else is supporting them you really support Croatia, is by no means something we should denounce.

While enjoying the sheer athleticism of great football is perfectly reasonable, it is not at all the same thing as being a football fan, where supporting a team is a crucial part of the "experience" (not the same thing as "joy" as every England or West Brom fan knows).

Most serious football fans in England will tell you straightforwardly

that they'd prefer to see a World Cup where England win outright with a series of utterly joyless one-nil and zero great tackles, than one where every game is a 7-goal thriller with amazing volleys and super corners but where England lose in the semi-final. That's just the way it is.

Of course politicians themselves have a long and pathetic history of resorting to sport to stir up nationalist sentiments or even just for a bit of shameless self-promotion disguised as national pride.

Chirac, a man who knew nothing about football and cared about it even less, was extremely willing have his photo taken shaking hands with the 1998 World Cup winning Zinedine Zidane and it's unlikely Macron will be any different.

Benjamin Netanyahu and other Likud politicians love to show their admiration for Beitar Jerusalem, a team with a large working-class but often very right-wing and racist following, as a proxy to show how patriotic they are.

Even more innocuous politicians in Britain will love to mention how they much their Everton or Burnley season ticket means to them. One

can't help feel a bit nauseous when politicians pretend to be so deeply invested in the success of a sports team when it's clear to everyone they care about nothing but promoting themselves

The fact that FIFA, an extraordinarily corrupt organisation, handed hosting duties to pretty vicious authoritarian states like Russia adds to the problem. All politically conscious football fans should be disgusted by the sight of Vladimir Putin holding the World Cup trophy.

So while the political uses of football and the political economy of the game are all manifestly interesting discussion points worthy of good political analyses, the joy of football need not itself be political. Nor is football itself a metaphor for life or wider society (I love him too but Gareth Southgate should not be Prime Minister).

There's nothing progressive about football, but it's not reactionary either. Nationalism is reactionary. Capitalism and corruption are appalling and so is machismo and drunken violence. But football needn't be any of these things.

**Football is a sport, just enjoy it. Or don't.**



## Tackling transphobia

### THE LEFT



**By Ira Berkovic**

**In a justified storm of criticism following the *Morning Star's* publication of an anti-trans open letter, a number of critical open letters were circulated in response, one of which was published by the paper (see link at the bottom of this article).**

One was headed 'Morning Star readers against transphobia'. Good that the letter has criticised the *Morning Star's* consistent record of giving houseroom to transphobia. It made those points well. But it couched criticisms in lavish praise of the paper. Its signatories said the paper "makes a vital contribution to the British labour movement".

In reality, the *Morning Star's* boosting of transphobia is not an aberration, but entirely consistent with its role as the organ of the Communist Party of Britain and the chief mouthpiece for "mainstream" Stalinism in Britain. Many prominent "gender-critical" (that is, anti-trans) feminists have a CPB background.

The letter says the *Morning Star* has a "proud and extraordinary history". It is certainly extraordinary: it includes such highlights as the article in 1981 justifying the actions of a racist mob in the Paris suburb of Vitry who bulldozed a hostel housing Malian migrants (the town's mayor was a Communist Party member).

More recently, the paper praised Bashar al-Assad's brutal siege of Aleppo, in which thousands of civilians died, as a "liberation", a description entirely consistent with its line of apologetics for the crimes of "anti-imperialist" dictators such as Assad and Slobodan Milosevic.

Its role in the domestic labour movement is also conservative. It denounced a recent rank-and-file revolt in the University and College Union as "tactical insanity", and accused the UCU members leading it of being stooges for the Socialist Workers' Party.

Tellingly, the open letter also objects to the *Morning Star's* transphobia on the basis that it is a "source of embarrassment to the paper's young supporters". This is undoubtedly true: a small clique of younger Stalinists has manoeuvred itself into positions of influence in Young Labour and Momentum, milieus where the *Morning Star's* transphobia (and hostility to free movement; and support for the likes of Assad) put its supporters very much at odds with the political instincts of most other activists around them. If these comrades find an association with the *Morning Star* "embarrassing", they should reconsider the association.

**The fight to place liberation and equality at the heart of the labour movement and the left, including the fight for a progressive position on trans rights, must also be a fight against the reactionary conservatism of Stalinism.**

• For informed discussion of proposed changes to the GRA see: <https://gradiscussion.wordpress.com/>

## A split in Iraqi socialist group

**Nadia Mahmood of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq spoke to Martin Thomas about a split within her organisation.**

**Nadia:** The resignation of our comrades Muayad Ahmed and Yanar Mohammad was announced after the central committee's decision to take away Falah Alwan's membership of the party.

**MT:** There must have been some political issues behind it, like the referendum?

**Nadia:** We always have different political views in our party. We always take decisions based on votes. That is basic. As regards the referendum, we had our differences but we set them out. So it wasn't an issue. And the referendum had been finished for months. There wasn't a split then.

We debated the referendum question and Muayad Ahmad's view was the dominant view on the political bureau. He opposed the referendum, other members of the PB defended it. However, a press release was written by Muayad Ahmad, it didn't say clearly whether we agreed or disagreed, it was left open. The party made a very vague statement on the referendum, the press release said the referendum vote was the right thing for the people. So the referendum was not the issue. However, that was in September 2017.

In May 2018, what happened was not to do with the referendum. The thing is that Alwan is 80% of the reason for our comrades to leave. But they brought the issue of "political differences" up as a reason for their resignation, as they feel it is not enough to say "this is because of Falah Alwan". It's not about dif-

ferent political views. We will always have different political views and settle them with votes." If there were different political views, there would be articles and debates. In our 33rd Central Committee's meeting, we all agreed upon our political resolution including Muayad and Yanar. But once the central committee discussed and announced their decision about Falah, they resigned, from the Central Committee, in a CC meeting and then they resigned from the party altogether.

Falah was a big issue. Later they declared that they wanted to leave the party altogether and set up a new political organisation. They have started doing this. They now say that they have different political views. Why didn't they say so before? He was secretary of the party for 6 years. And we were about to elect him again. From where did these differences come?

### REORGANISATION

**MT:** Could it be that there are political differences which are present, but not expressed clearly?

**Nadia:** I think that Muayad and [indistinct] weren't happy about the discipline in the organisation of the party. [That is] when we started our reorganisation of the party following the CC 32nd meeting, and a new phase of our political work, to act as a united party regulated by our agreed rules and principles. Yanar, Falah and Muayad and [indistinct] were not happy about this. They said that if we re-organised the party we would destroy it. And the reality was we did not have strong organisation, no-one knows the full size of our organisation, and the kind of activity they do was unclear.

While the main thing was that some mem-

bers work as paid staff for the Organisation for Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), or they are surrounded by Falah's organisation, the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI), very limited work has been done for the party itself. We don't know exactly who is a member and who is not. The members and in particular the new ones were confused and mistook OWFI's work or the FWCUI work with the party's work. The party's work is let down.

We have to assert that OWFI work is not party work. Party cells have to meet. But OWFI workers would not attend separate party cell meetings or do party work.

The party at the organisational level became divided: those who implement our party plan for organising members in cells; and those who advocated not doing this and work instead for OWFI and the FWCUI. A majority of the Central Committee voted to exclude Falah. He will have the chance to come back before Congress to correct this. But he did not accept that.

**MT:** What are the party's main plans for activity now? What are the things you plan to do in the next months?

**Nadia:** We are guided by our CC meeting's political resolution that society has suffered economically and politically and we have to organise our working class and those who believe in the necessity of changing the current political situation.

We believe the post war political arrangement based on power sharing should be ended. Of course our ultimate aim as communists is to establish a socialist state. Towards this end, the most important thing is that we have our members organised in their districts and their places of work to influence, organise their soundings. To organise protests in their areas for electricity, jobs, services. Also to have our members organise protests in their work; organise and build networks with people sharing the demand of political change, political freedoms, end militias, end sectarianism in Iraq.

We opposed the fake "political representation" that was introduced through the current parliamentary elections, which proved to be completely corrupt.

To achieve all this, we always followed the formula, Propaganda, Agitation and Organisation. Thus, in every aspect, whether political, social we work to have our members reach out and make propaganda for our ideas: for example, about workers' councils, and attract the workers to our party. Attract them to our ideas, through our newspaper, meetings, educational sessions for the members and non-members.

So, our plan is to work with the working class, this is the first thing. The second thing is working with youth. The latter suffered a lot from lack of jobs and unemployment or under employment. There are always threats on their life if they act politically. There are even attacks on their personal freedoms. Now, we can see that there are tendencies within the youth in Iraq towards Marxism.

Young people are so upset with Islamic parties that some are attracted to our party. In the last election, the Iraqi Communist Party allied with Sadr. So some young people were very angry with the Iraqi Communist Party and came to join our party. So we have to educate young people in Marxism, and work with the youth.

**Of course we want to reach out for women, but this seems more difficult as women are mainly the first victims of the economic and political situation.**

## Learning from difficulties

**By Martin Thomas**

**We plan to follow this interview by one covering the same sort of issues with Muayad Ahmed, also a worker-communist activist in Iraq.**

Workers' Liberty has worked with the Worker-communist Parties of Iraq and of Kurdistan for many years, though always with political debates and differences between us.

In May 2018, however, Muayad Ahmed, secretary of the Central Committee of the WCPI for many years, Yanar Mohammed, leader of the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq, and others, resigned from the WCPI. The division is public — on Facebook, in Arabic, at least — but its consequences are unclear to us.

The immediate occasion was the Central Committee's decision to expel Falah Alwan from the WCPI. Falah Alwan is the leader of the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions of Iraq. We met him when he visited Britain in 2005, and have spoken with him by phone many times to get reports of workers' struggles in Iraq.

The background to the expulsion was anger against a public article written by Falah Alwan in 2017 denouncing Rebwar Ahmed and other WCPI leaders in vehement terms over their support for the independence referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan held in September 2017.

The referendum was called by Kurdish president Masoud Barzani in June 2017, after Kurdish victories against Daesh which for a while established Kurdish control over

some territories which before Daesh had been governed as part of Arab Iraq.

The referendum returned a huge majority for independence, but Baghdad, with Iranian backing, responded by a military operation to retake control of Kirkuk and other areas. Barzani backed down, "froze" the referendum result, and subsequently resigned.

At the time we, AWL, criticised the approach of the WCPI and the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan to the referendum as not posing the issues in working-class internationalist (or realistic) terms ([bit.ly/wcpi-letter](http://bit.ly/wcpi-letter)).

There have been other contentious issues. The WCPI committee has supported a breakaway union federation alongside the FWCUI. There are differences over the precise attitude to take to the Iraqi government reconquest of Mosul. Muayad Ahmed, with hindsight, is critical of the WCPI's "Iraqi Freedom Congress" formed in 2005.

Some say that an underlying issue is the tension between organising WCPI party work, and the pull of activity with FWCUI and in the OWFI. OWFI, unlike the WCPI, has some funding, some paid employees: it runs a number of women's shelters, and had its deputy director, Jannat Al Ghezi, given an International Women of Courage Award in 2017 by Melania Trump on behalf of the US State Department.

Neither side names any of these differences as the decisive issue in the split, and we can't judge from a distance.

**We will continue to discuss with comrades on both sides, and to try to clarify and learn from the political difficulties.**



# Seize chances of Tory chaos! Labour can stop Brexit!

**Left Against Brexit committees and campaigns are being launched across the country along with organising efforts for the Left Against Brexit speaker tour ([www.anothereurope.org/tour/](http://www.anothereurope.org/tour/)).**

They are organising street stalls, debates, and speakers and motions to labour movement organisations.

With the Tories in trouble — even more trouble after Donald Trump told them that their Brexit plan would block a trade deal with the USA — an active Left Against Brexit campaign has a real chance of shifting the axis of debate.

Many people oppose Brexit. The demonstration on 23 June for a “people’s vote” on whatever final deal the Tories produce drew over 100,000 people. Opinion polls now show a slight but fairly stable anti-Brexit majority.

But so far the themes of workers’ unity across Europe, free movement, migrant rights, and the potential to fight for social and democratic levelling-up across Europe, have not got enough airtime.

The conservative arguments against Brexit — disruption to supply chains and trade, and so on — have got more circulation.

Organise enough of the left Labour and trade union activists committed to reducing rather than raising borders between countries, and we can change that.

With the “Chequers formula” of 6 July, the Tories were going for a relatively “soft” Brexit, compared to their earlier agitation. As we go to press that formula is not holding up against divisions in the Tory party. Whatever,

there will be a “transition period” running to December 2020. The one thing the Tories haven’t budged substantially on yet is curtailing freedom of movement.

As we say there are likely to be difficulties and crises along the road to the Tories. Not least in getting their formula or some recognisable variant of it negotiated with the EU, as well as approved by their own ultra-Brexit back-bench MPs.

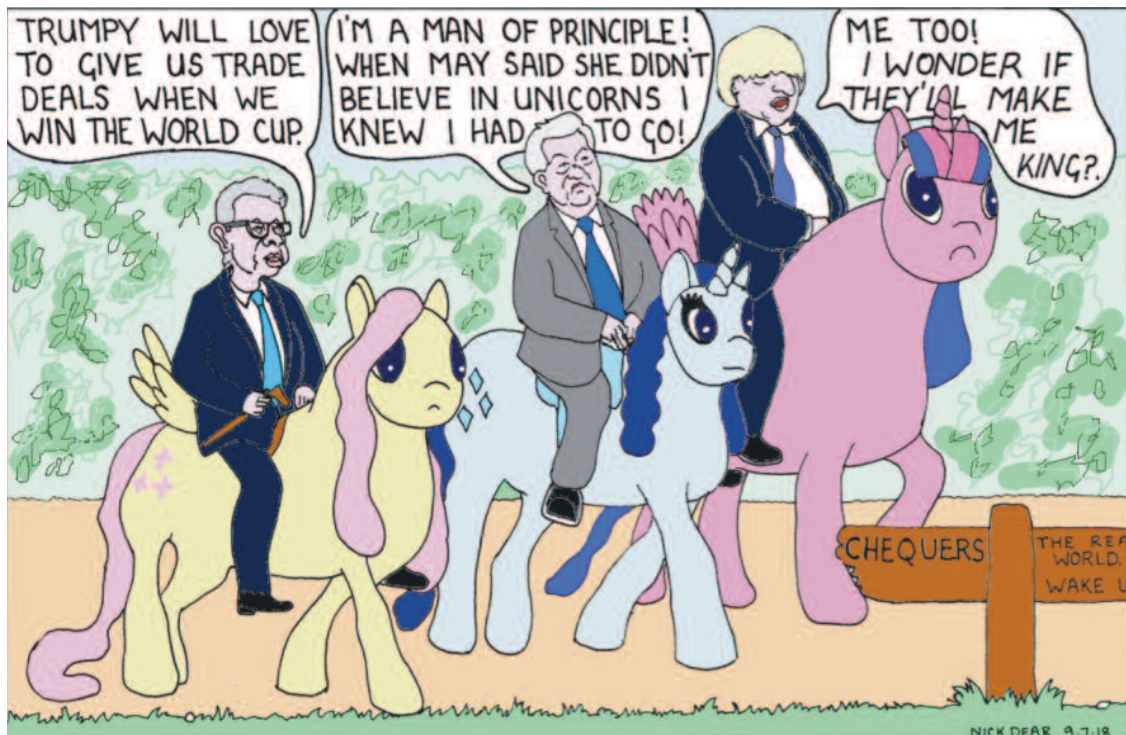
That combination, as the *Financial Times* puts it, opens many variants.

“The possibility arises that in the autumn Mrs May will be unable to secure a Commons majority for either a deal or no deal. In that scenario, she may have no other choice but to appeal to the EU to extend the two-year Article 50 exit process while she tries to resolve the political stalemate.

“The only way out of such an impasse might be to hold a general election, or for Mrs May to put her deal to a second referendum”.

We want a left campaign to equip Labour to move on from its current evasive stance to a clear anti-Brexit policy capable of seizing such chances.

The latest opinion polls show UKIP recovering from rates of as low as 1% as recently as March 2018 to 8% now. It remains to be seen whether today’s much-reduced UKIP (it



scored 13% in the 2015 general election) can hold that bounce.

In one form or another, though, if the Tories remain fixed on a relatively “soft” Brexit, right-wing nationalists who rallied to the Tories after June 2016 will swing away and become stropier again. The left must be ready to fight that threat directly.

Even if something like the “Chequers for-

mula” is negotiated with the EU, issues will proliferate. If the Tories restrict freedom of movement and migrant rights, how much will they do that? Will Labour commit to reversing those restrictions? Or reversing Tory measures to withdraw from parts of the Single Market?

**Left Against Brexit — onto the streets!**

# No violence in the labour movement!

**On Saturday 7 July, a group of Workers' Liberty supporters went along to the SWP's annual Marxism festival. We wanted to talk to attendees and challenge some of the SWP's politics, and especially their support for “Lexit” during the European referendum.**

We were leafleting for a fringe meeting hosted by ourselves — The Left Should Oppose Brexit. One of the guest speakers was from Another Europe is Possible/Left Against Brexit.

The result of this activity? The SWP first overturning and breaking our stall while it was set up outside the Institute of Education. The material overturned from the stall was picked up by SWP organisers and put on the floor on the footpath. One of the organisers stole a chunk of the Brexit event leaflets. Some of the material was torn up.

Later, when standing outside Student Central (Malet Street) SWP members stood round our leafleters making petty comments and obstructing them for over an hour.

Behaving like police enforcers against picketers or demonstrators we were continually asked to move one or two metres in order to stand on the pavement. One SWPer challenged one of our members to a fight.

The image shows the result of a gang of them coming to remove us from IoE: the stall on its side, broken with a pile of material in the gutter, including some which has been ripped up.



The SWP have form here. At Marxism 1993 two of our comrades were physically assaulted by SWP thugs. At the time the AWL launched a campaign against violence in the labour movement. We said then and we repeat it now: the left has disagreements but these should always be resolved by discus-

sion and debate.

**It should be completely taken for granted that the left should interact without resorting to physical obstruction, removal from venues, destroying literature and threatening physical fights.**

## Please sign this statement

**At the Socialist Workers' Party's “Marxism 2018” event, SWP members turned over and broke Workers' Liberty's stall; threw on the floor, tore up and stole some of the AWL literature and materials; and engaged in harassment of AWLers, including challenging one of them to a fight.**

**The rule on the left should be unity in action where we agree, and orderly, democratic debate, without violence or intimidation, where we disagree.**

**If the accusations are true, those involved and those responsible must be held accountable. We call on the SWP Central Committee to organise an investigation into what happened.**

**To sign this statement email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) with your name and any labour movement position you**



# Can teacher walkouts revive US unions?

Lois Weiner is a socialist and teacher trade unionist based in New York. She is the author of *The Future of our Schools: Teacher Unions and Social Justice* (2012, Haymarket Books) and a member of the editorial board of the socialist journal *New Politics*. She talked to *Solidarity* about the recent wave of teacher walkouts in the US and the state of the US labour movement.

**It's clear that activity among teachers, and in teachers' unions, is very important to the resurgence of the US labour movement**

That's partly because the other things that are happening have not been as dramatic, although there's something very important going on with the organisation of low-wage workers. The problem is that the unions are too weak to win gains through direct action.

One of the reasons the activity among teachers has been so dramatic is that it's a sector in which the federal state is, even where it's not the employer, is affecting teachers' wages, working conditions, and benefits to a very great extent. It's not privatised yet, to the extent that hospitals are.

It remains to be seen what will happen [to the unions] in the wake of the Janus decision. [A recent Supreme Court ruling to the effect that public sector unions do not have the right to collect from non-members the equivalent of monies the union spends bargaining on their behalf or representing them to the employer. These are called agency fees.]

Many public employee unions are dependent on the agency fee for varying amounts of their financial base. The elimination of agency fee means that people who were members now have no "incentive" to be members, because even as non-members they would have to pay almost the equivalent of full dues.

No-one knows what percentage of current members will remain members. Most unions adopted quite an apolitical strategy for dealing with it, which was to have people sign cards saying they would continue to be members, without connecting that to a discussion about what the union should be. They didn't use the card as an organising strategy to get members involved, they used it as a strategy to continue with the status quo.

And no-one knows what will happen with Trump's machinations with tariffs, and how that'll affect white workers who supported him. There's no way to separate what's going to happen in the labour movement with what's happening in wider society, for example with deportations. Some of the unions have been excellent in fighting the deportations and protecting members, but the labour movement as a whole has been unwilling, as usual, to engage in any kind of direct action. It is obvious that the AFL-CIO is very concerned about the support of white workers for Trump.

When you talk about "organised labour", you're talking about service workers, public employees, the building trades, and the very small percentage of workers now in manufacturing. There's a different response from the unions in each of those sectors to Trump.

This past spring, I spoke to a social justice committee drawn from various [teacher union] locals in south San Diego which is right on the border. They already have a wall. I met women, all elementary school teachers; the locals' base included two school districts

that were solely elementary schools, which hadn't consolidated with high schools, and 85% of all K through 6 [in the UK, the equivalent of nursery and primary school teachers] teachers are women. So these are really unions of women, and their officers are all women as well, which is very unusual. They work in a working-class community that is overwhelmingly Latinx and immigrant, and have been involved in a protracted campaign to win a better contract. A couple of the teachers themselves have been involved in anti-deportation campaigns.

I became involved with them and started to advise them informally; there was fear amongst the teachers, and they were looking for support in the community, but the parents were themselves afraid because of the threat of deportations. As we talked about it, they said that some of the parents are members of unions. They called on those parents to help them, and got resolutions of support and they got a motion of support from the San Diego Labour Council. So there's a way in which these grassroots struggles are creating solidarity networks, even though union density is very low. These are both labour-movement networks and community networks.

When my book [*The Future of our Schools: Teacher Unions and Social Justice*] first came out, people asked me, "what's this distinction between a social justice union and a social movement union?" For me the distinction has always been that the union has to be the connective tissue of a social movement. In all the teacher walkouts, we began to see that happening.

## STATES

**The states are all different in terms of the legality of unionising and striking. Collective bargaining rights in different states are different for police, teachers, firefighters, other public employees.**

You can have the formal right to strike, but a judge can still issue an injunction to send you back to work if they rule that your strike is in violation of the public good. So in New Jersey, for example, where teachers formally have the legal right to strike, the courts almost always send them back to work as soon as the School Board asks for an injunction. But while the legal situation is mixed and unclear, as in many spheres, legality can be trumped by politics.

There have been teacher walkouts in West Virginia, which began it all, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, and a one-day walkout of 30,000 people in North Carolina. Predominantly these states are "red states", with Republican legislatures. They voted for Trump. North Carolina is slightly distinct in that, until recently, it had a Democratic legislature and a corporate-liberal Republican party.

They are states which have all had severe cuts to school funding, and which have teacher salaries paid primarily by the state, with local districts having the right to supplement the salaries. That's a very important difference from, say, Texas, or New York, where schools are funded by local property taxes. In such places there is a nexus between residential segregation and school segregation because people of colour are kept out of white school districts. They can't buy property there. At the same time, lower-middle-class and working-class white districts have a hard time funding their schools, because the tax base is not high enough. And teachers' wages are the main cost for school district. So if you look at property taxes and teachers' salaries,

you just see a one-to-one correlation. But in the states where the walkouts occurred, this isn't the case. The state legislatures fund the schools directly, and then wealthier districts fund themselves on top of this.

What happened in these states is that teacher activists, some of them union members but most of them not, set up either closed or secret Facebook pages. They often started with local walkouts that were coordinated and grown, county by county, to become statewide walkouts. These movements mushroomed. I was on the Facebook pages, and you saw a process of politicisation that was amazing. People would start off by saying, "well, I'm afraid. I'm willing to walk out, but only if others do." So they devised this strategy, because they're public employees, of using personal days or sick days. They'd phone in to say they weren't coming to work and the school would have to be closed. If a whole school district closed, workers didn't have to use a personal day or sick day. And if too many school districts close, the whole county has to close. This strategy was able to sustain the movement for longer.

The explosion over pay has occurred as part of social turmoil post-Trump. Also, many teachers were inspired by students' walkouts following the Parkland school shooting. There has been a lot of grassroots organising in schools about testing for years. There's something called the "opt-out movement".

Both the teacher unions, the American Federation of Teachers [AFT] and the National Education Association [NEA] refused to fight the tying of teacher evaluation to student test scores, so teachers really felt deserted, betrayed, isolated, and demoralised. A group formed several years ago called the Badass Teachers' Association. They said, "we refuse to be blamed for everything that's going on", because the narrative is that teacher quality is the most important factor in student performance. That narrative fed the rage at poor working conditions, de-professionalisation, and the poor material conditions for teaching. People were seeing their pay diminish because of factors including rising healthcare costs, and the shifting of healthcare costs onto individual workers.

The right has launched a big campaign against public employee pension funds, saying they're going to go under, and can't be sustained. People are being told to contribute more to their pension at the same time as state governments are saying, "we can't afford to pay your pension", and telling retirees they're going to have to take pension cuts.

One fact that has not been well publicised, and which should make us hopeful, is that probably a majority of the teachers who walked out voted for Trump. Many of them will also have voted for the governors who have ridiculed and attacked them. But what's also interesting is that Sanders won in the overwhelmingly in the primaries in West Virginia. The Clinton wing of the Democratic Party pushes the idea that Trump voters are "deplorables". This is completely contradicted by the teacher walkouts. We see a very volatile political mix in the white Trump voters, and I think had Sanders won the Democratic nomination we would have seen a very different election.

The walkouts in each state had a different rhythm. Those differences have to do with the politics and demographics of each state. West Virginia as a state is 96.4% white. It's also a state that has a fairly recent history of

union militancy. Also in West Virginia, while the first walkouts and demonstrations didn't occur directly because of the agitation of socialists, socialists were the among the de facto organisers of the walkouts. They were the connective element; in the first place, they were connected to one another. Often, local union representatives assisted them. But unions in many places had memberships of under two digits. Nobody belonged to the union. Why would you? They weren't even good professional associations. The movement in West Virginia was built over a period of months.

In Oklahoma the movement was sparked by people who were excited by West Virginia. But it didn't have the same incubation period, and it was consequently organisationally weaker. The weakness was also to do with racial issues. The epicentres of the walkouts were Tulsa and Oklahoma City, and Tulsa has a history of very violent racial pogroms. It is a completely segregated city, with a completely segregated school system. The teachers hadn't won the support of the African-American community. The same thing is true in Kentucky, which also didn't have that preparatory period of developing organisation prior to the walkouts.

The political leadership in Kentucky came from an education advocacy group, "Save Our Schools Kentucky", of which many teachers were members. It had a cordial relations with the Network for Public Education, the group created by [education policy analyst and former Assistant Secretary of Education] Diane Ravitch. Again, the union was irrelevant in organising the struggle. In Kentucky the Facebook page was less open. There were internal divisions, and the discussion of race and racism was dismissed as "divisive" by one of the spokespeople.

Arizona was more like the West Virginia, with a fairly long incubation period. They did "walk-ins". Parents and teachers would gather outside the school, wearing red [the red t-shirt idea pioneered by the Chicago Teachers' Union, CTU], and they would walk into the school together. They had "red for ed" bumper stickers; they painted their cars red. They did all of these things to raise public awareness of their struggle, and galvanise workers who were afraid they'd lose their jobs if they identified with the movement.

There were some macho AFT locals in Arizona who kept prematurely calling for a statewide walkout, and pulling their own members out. But the leadership of the Arizona walkouts were in contact with people from West Virginia, and they learned from them and from Chicago. The Arizona NEA affiliate also learned from those struggles; they worked with the Facebook page rather than attempting to subvert it. This was an instance where the unions weren't a brake on struggle, a force for betrayal.

It flatters the union leaderships to call them a "bureaucracy". It's an apparatus of staffers, with a few elected people. They're politically unsophisticated; they're not organisers. They mainly function to give the national union a presence in states. By numbers the NEA is the bigger union, but politically the AFT is more important, partly because of its affiliation with the AFL-CIO. The AFT has an explicitly pro-capitalist ideology. It is completely aligned with the Clinton wing of the Democratic party. But it is very adept at borrowing the rhetoric of social justice. It's a machine, run from national headquarters. The NEA is more like other liberal, progressive, or





pseudo-progressive unions, such as SEIU [Service Employees International Union], but less politically sophisticated.

The unions have state-level organisations, and some school district-level organisations. But in many school districts they don't even have the pretence of organisation, which is part of the reason why they have so few members.

### ORGANISATION

**The debate about how to organise is at different places in different states. In Oklahoma and Kentucky the movement was crushed.**

They were betrayed by the state union. The union cut a deal with the state legislature, that was not at all reflective of what people wanted. No-one had the opportunity to vote on these deals, not even those teachers who were members of the unions making them. And they used all of their political clout to call off the walkouts, and the people who had organised the walkouts were too tired and confused to figure out what to do and they had no organisation that could have provided a counterweight to the union apparatus.

Only the workers of West Virginia and Arizona understood in advance the threat of betrayal and sell-out from the state union. The weeks and weeks of preparatory organising had shown them the importance of workplace organisation, they saw the state union was not supporting them in that, and that seasoned them.

In West Virginia, a lot of people have joined the union. The grassroots leaders understand that they have to have a rank-and-file caucus; they need a different kind of union, they need to transform the union. In Arizona, the existing union leadership worked with the walk-out leaders. They understand now that they need to go into the union and bring the experience that they have had into the union. But in Oklahoma and Kentucky that is not the case. Many people are demoralised.

In North Carolina teachers have a caucus

within the union that was formed by liberals, radicals and socialists, called Organise 2020. But it's not limited to the union; it's more of a social movement. It has hooked up with civil rights movements. Its membership is multiracial, and its programme is race conscious, but in a way that combines taking on racism with a class analysis. They understand their role in helping to rebuild the labour movement in the south. So after the walkouts started elsewhere, this caucus, which has won the leadership of key locals in cities, said, "we should be doing something". They took leadership.

There's a tension around electoral action, which is very apparent on the Facebook pages. Some people say, "we need direct action", others say, "we need to elect different people". I think an exclusive focus on electing individuals is a completely dead end, but that doesn't mean the debate about electoral activity is wrong. In Arizona, they have organised to put a proposal on the ballot for legislature elections to attempt to win via a referendum what they could win via electing different people to the legislature.

How are we going to engage in politics? Are we going to engage primarily by trying to get good individuals elected, or are we going to build a political movement, which may run candidates? There's a lot of naivete, and there's going to be disappointment, about the fact that any individuals that are elected aren't going to be able to do very much. They'll be up against the incredible resources the far right has poured into winning these legislatures. That is where the resources of ALEC [the American Legislative Exchange Council, a hard-right think-tank-type organisation via which right-wing politicians formulate legislation to propose to state legislatures] have gone.

Fundamentally the walkout movement was a fantastic example of the self-organisation of the working class. It appeared to explode out of nowhere, but nothing really comes out of nowhere. I think in Arizona and West Virginia we will see the transformation of the unions at the state level. At the local

level, it will be about creating unions, which will depend on who's there in particular schools and counties. There's a reciprocal effect between having a dynamic state-level union organisation which encourages dynamic local organisation, which then encourage other locals.

I'm very hopeful about North Carolina. In Kentucky and Oklahoma, it remains to be seen. I can't make any predictions about those states; people were very demoralised, but sometimes out of demoralisation you get a more politically sophisticated cadre.

*Labor Notes* has provided a network for people to support each other. I support the work that *Labor Notes* does, although I think they have been too close to the existing leaders of the so-called "progressive" unions, and insufficiently critical of them. In that relationship between support and critique, I'd like to see *Labor Notes* move more towards critique.

There are differences between reform caucuses. You can have something which calls itself a reform caucus but is really just a slate to exist a new leadership. What was significant about the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators [CORE] in the Chicago Teachers' Union was that it built its base before it became a contender for leadership. This meant that when they were able to win the leadership, they totally transformed everything. Among the caucuses we've seen develop, Organise 2020 in North Carolina is the closest to being what you might call CORE's inheritor. There are also strong reform caucuses in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and elsewhere. So we are seeing the emergence of potential leaderships, but whether these new leaderships will be able to break from past practice depends on whether there's prior and ongoing mobilisation of a base.

It is not automatic that this movement will link up with other growing movements of social resistance to the Trump regime and its policies. That's why it's important for socialists to raise these questions. In West Virginia the main demand was over funding of health insurance for public employees, so I asked them if they were linking up with commu-

nity groups campaigning for single-payer healthcare [a model of semi-socialised healthcare]. Sometimes it takes people from the outside, or socialists inside struggles, to raise the idea that connections need to be made. As socialists I think we understand the connectedness of struggles. That's something we bring in our involvement with struggles, and we shouldn't be afraid to do that, even as supporters.

I recently shared a panel at the Left Forum [a large left-wing convention which takes place annually in New York] with Keith Benson, an African-American educator from Camden, New Jersey, a very poor city, who got active in the union after reading *The Future of Our Schools*, and he's now president of his local union, the Camden Education Association, an NEA affiliate. I refused to participate in a panel that was all white, so I suggested Keith's name to the Left Forum organisers and he agreed to speak.

At the panel, someone asked a question about teachers' unions linking up with other public sector workers' unions. Keith said, "in the city of Camden, teachers earn on average about \$65,000 a year. Most Camden residents earn about \$9 an hour. And they aren't in unions." So we can't understand rebuilding the labour movement as just being about connecting with people who are already in unions, but about building solidarity with people who aren't yet in unions. As, or more, important than linking up with other existing public employee unions is linking up with Fight for \$15 [the fast food workers' movement] and organising the unorganised.

Teachers are in every community in every state. So I'm hopeful that they can be a grounding for creating networks and alliances that haven't existed before between social movements and workers' struggles. It's about building a movement of self-organisation of the class.

**A recording of the interview will appear on Labour Days soon.**

• This is an abridged version. For the full article see [bit.ly/LoisWeiner](http://bit.ly/LoisWeiner).



# Venezuela, Bolivarianism, and Bonapartism

By Eduardo Tovar

**El Cinco de Julio (July 5) is Venezuelan Independence Day — marking the day in 1811 when a congress of Venezuelan provinces declared Venezuela's separation from the Spanish Crown.**

Venezuela became the first Spanish American colony to declare independence. One of the major figures in the broader fight for national liberation from Spanish rule was Simón Bolívar, popularly known as El Libertador.

Bolívar is lionised for bringing freedom to not only Venezuela, but also to Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Panama. So powerful are the connotations of liberation, pan-Americanism, and anti-colonial struggle around his name that the late Hugo Chávez readily described his own political movement as Bolivarianism and even changed his country's official name to the "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela". Indeed, Chávez and his successor Nicolás Maduro were so keen to establish a continuity between Chavismo and Venezuela's initial anti-colonial revolution that, in 2013, the Maduro Administration controversially added Chávez's signature to a museum-exhibited copy of the 1811 Declaration of Independence.

It is disquieting that large sections of the international left valorise a movement that enthusiastically views itself as "Bolivarian". In December 1857 to January 1858, Marx wrote an extremely depreciating article on Bolívar for the *New American Cyclopaedia*, titled 'Bolívar y Ponte'. To be clear, numerous historical details within the article are mistaken (including the subject's full surname, which was in fact 'Bolívar y Blanco'). Nevertheless, as Hal Draper points out in his 1968 *New Politics* article 'Karl Marx and Simon Bolívar', Marx's factual errors about Bolívar's life do not negate Marx's political evaluation.

Marx's *Cyclopaedia* article consistently highlights the central problem of Bolívar's position as an authoritarian, militaristic aris-

tocrat leading a generally progressive movement for independence. The relevant theoretical lens through which Marx viewed Bolívar was Bonapartism. As Marx elaborated in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) and *The Rule of the Praetorians* (1858), Bonapartism is where a military regime assumes political control of the state during a stalemate in the class struggle. In such periods, the bourgeoisie loses much of its political power, but retains its social power, and its long-term interests enjoy the protection of the military regime. Moreover, the state attains an unprecedented level of autonomy from civil society.

## BONAPARTIST

**Marx repeatedly makes his characterisation of Bolívar as a Bonapartist explicit.**

For instance, in a letter to Engels dated 14 February 1858, Marx calls Bolívar "a veritable Soulouque", which was a common sobriquet for Napoleon III. One could even say that the main theme of Marx's *Cyclopaedia* article is the fundamental tension between Bolívar's Bonapartism and the interests of the independence movement. On numerous occasions, Bolívar attempted to assert personal dictatorship in the face of attempts by the anti-colonial revolutionaries to establish democracy.

In his 1812 *Manifiesto of Cartegena*, written shortly before he took Caracas and openly assumed a dictatorial role, Bolívar described his compatriots as "not yet capable of exercising their legal rights". Similarly, in his 1815 Letter from Jamaica, he asserts that the "radical democratic system" established in the US would "bring ruin" upon South Americans, who in Bolívar's view lacked the "talents and virtues" to make such a system feasible.

Bolívar became Dictator of Peru in 1824 and aspired to bring together a "Federation of the Andes", with the different republics adopting his Bolivarian Constitution. Under this constitution, Censors would be elected for life, and Tribunes and Senators would be

elected once, but their successors would be chosen by their respective chambers from candidates presented by citizens, as opposed to citizens being able to vote for the candidates themselves. The President would be named for life and appoint his own successor. Colombia and Peru both resisted this naked emulation of the Napoleonic consular government, but in August 1926 Bolívar imposed it upon Peru by force.

Whatever Bolívar's importance as a military leader, his Bonapartist tendencies meant that the independence struggle could never meet the full extent of its liberatory potential. Several scholars with a pro-Bolívar perspective, such as Gerhard Masur, do not deny the more overtly despotic aspects of Bolívar's politics. On the contrary, they often defend these despotic aspects on similar grounds to those Bolívar himself would invoke: dictatorship was "only possible solution" in the face of potential "anarchy" and the people first needed to be "made ready" for self-rule.

We should be wary of how Bolivarianism is romanticised and of the role this romanticism plays in 21st century Latin American politics. Characterising Bolívar as a "benevolent despot" who needed to "train" his backwards people for democratic government has uncomfortable echoes with the excuses made for authoritarian leaders in the Global South today. This is especially true of despots perceived as playing an "anti-imperial" role against the United States.

As Hal Draper put it, "people do not become 'trained' for democracy nor do they 'mature' except by their own fight for democracy, against the power that tells them it is 'training' them — and against the intellectual servitors who apologise with these arguments". If a figure or organisation spearheading a struggle against foreign imperialism is actively hostile to the labour movement and suppresses the workers' ability to organise themselves democratically, then supporting that figure or organisation betrays our overarching objective of emancipating the work-



ing class around the world.

Indeed, lending such support falls into a form of Orientalist thinking, treating the pro-democratic, pro-worker, and pro-liberation criticisms we would make of political movements in the Global North as essentially inapplicable to political movements in the Global South. This is why, in his 1929 essay on the "Anti-Imperialist Viewpoint", Peruvian revolutionary José Carlos Mariátegui was correct to warn against raising anti-imperialism "to the level of a program, a political attitude, a movement that is valid in and of itself and that leads spontaneously to socialism, to the social revolution".

In failing to take heed of the sharp criticisms Marx made of Bolívar's anti-democratic beliefs and actions, even when Bolívar fought as part of a broadly progressive struggle against foreign rule, we run a serious risk of failing to oppose the anti-democratic beliefs and actions of modern "benevolent despots" resisting imperialism or colonialism.

**This includes the figures proudly leading the "Bolivarian Revolution" in Venezuela today.**

# Understanding racism in Scotland

Anne Field reviews *No Problem Here — Understanding Racism in Scotland*, Luath Press 2018.

**No Problem Here — Understanding Racism in Scotland challenges "the conventional 'race-blind' narratives that Scotland and its elites have crafted over many years," according to which "Scotland does not have a serious racism problem."**

This "now powerful myth that there is 'no problem here'" has put down even deeper roots in recent years as a result of "the new common sense of Scottish politics, the dominant story that has been forged by the SNP and others."

In fact, argues the collection of essays which makes up the book, "everyday racism remains a deeply structuring force distorting the lives of those we know as 'black and brown Scots'. From racist harassment in the community to systematic discrimination in the workplace, these so-called new Scots remain a class apart."

The book's different chapters — all bar one being papers delivered at an international conference organised by the book's

editors — deconstruct different elements of that myth.

Some of the chapters focus on empirical evidence which demonstrates the extent of racism and racist discrimination in Scotland — in employment, housing, transport, and health services, and statistics for racially motivated crimes. Other chapters focus on specific groups and the specific forms of racism which they experience, such as anti-Muslim racism and the racism experienced by Roma, Gypsies and Travellers.

## SECTARIANISM

**Three chapters address "sectarianism".**

Two argue that "sectarianism" is a misnomer for racism towards Irish Catholics and that this constituted an indigenous Scottish development in which Irish Catholics became a "racialised other". The concept of "sectarianism" has the added benefit of giving succour to the myth that Scotland is a largely racism-free country. One of the book's contributors quotes a character in Rankin's *Fleshmarket Close*: "We don't have room for racism, we're too busy with bigotry."

The third, much more academic, chapter on "sectarianism" argues that it represents a

form of "classic middle-class moral panic" focused on "male, working-class football fans" who must be subjected to the "civilising offensive" of the (now repealed) Offensive Behaviour at Football Act.

The book's opening chapters place Scotland's contemporary racism in a historical context: the central and disproportionately important role played by Scots in the British Empire, especially on the Indian subcontinent and in relation to slavery in the Caribbean. But Scotland's contribution to British imperialism is either written out of orthodox Scottish-nationalist versions of Scottish history or dissolved into the overarching responsibility of "a reactionary British/English establishment."

This finds expression in the SNP-government-sponsored "Homecoming Scotland" events, marketed in Canada, the USA, New Zealand and Australia. By contrast, the Caribbean, where many inhabitants still see themselves as part of the Scottish diaspora, has been ignored.

What the book's editors call "the most directly political intervention here (in the book)" is a contribution from Alan Armstrong, although it is difficult to see what merits its inclusion. According to Arm-

strong, the SNP's "civic nationalism" contains "a universal element", the 2014 independence referendum was the first phase of Scotland's "democratic revolution", and "only the break-up of Britain will open up the road to a genuine internationalism and the socialist transformation of society."

As a collection of essays and papers, the book inevitably suffers from a lack of continuity. It also sidesteps the upsurge in anti-English hostility during and since the 2014 referendum, as it would be "misleading to analyse anti-Englishness through the prism of racism." Fair enough — but that anti-Englishness also says something about the SNP's "civic" nationalism.

And while some contributions to the book question how "civic" the SNP's "civic nationalism" really is, none of them home in on the fact that, however it packages itself, nationalism is nationalism and, as such, seeks to mobilise people on the basis of national identity.

A contribution to the issue of antisemitism in Scotland might also have been of use — although that would have depended on the contents of any such contribution.

**Even so, the book has the potential to help open up a long overdue debate about the prevalence of racism in Scotland (including anti-Irish racism) and the forms which it takes. As the closing contribution to the book puts it: "racism works differently in Scotland."**



# Labour, policing, race and class

By Carrie Evans

**Labour have positioned themselves as the party of law and order. Most notably they are calling for police funding to go back to pre-2010 levels, and promising 25,000 extra police on the streets.**

An increase in violent crime made the news in early 2018 when a wave of knife and gun crime left many dead. Knife crime has increased by 22% in the last year alone, and homicide by 15% (although this figure includes people killed in the Manchester bomb attack, which increases the homicide rate a lot). But police officer numbers have fallen by 20,000 since 2010.

So it is very tempting and easy to draw an A-to-B line between these two truths and say, “What we need is more police and police funding”. And for Labour this comes with the added bonus of being able to embarrass the Tory Party, who are traditionally seen as the law and order party.

So what should socialists be saying about this? In short, we definitely shouldn't be calling for more police.

As a socialist, my beef with the police is not just hostility towards some of the social roles they play. At their heart, the police exist to repress the working class and defend private property. Any other useful function that the police may play in society is an accidental by-product of that main function. The police as an institution cannot be reformed. This can be hard to wrap your head around; it is at odds with everything you are taught from a young age about what the police do.

I am from an under-class, multi-ethnic, inner-city background. I was raised from a young age to deeply mistrust the police and everything they do and say – but I didn't fully understand the nature of the police until quite recently.

## MODERN

**The modern police force as a professional, centrally-organised force started to take shape in the 1800s, particularly with Robert Peel's creation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. It was a reaction to urbanisation.**

Before becoming Home Secretary, Robert Peel was Chief Secretary for Ireland, where he found local magistrates were unfit to maintain law and order. He set up the Peace Preservation Force in 1814, and a system of county constabularies under the 1822 County Constabulary Act. These were invented to keep Irish people in their place. The initiative proved so successful it was taken over to England and used to deal with the new, unruly, urbanised working class.

At the time there was widespread moral panic about the criminal nature of the working class. Establishment figures were concerned that there was going to be a workers' uprising. The police force proved to be an extremely popular solution to these problems. The police were never intended to protect all people from crime, but to protect private property from the working class.

Since then, the fundamental role of policing has not dramatically changed — they've just got a lot better at doing PR! Whenever there is an upsurge in working-class action, the police and the criminal justice system are there to stamp it back down. We saw this during the 1984 miners' strike and more recently in the 2011 London riots.

The police are not there to protect people

from crime, but to protect private property, business interests and ensure the status quo prevails. A left-wing Labour leader should not be calling for more money for the police.

But what do we do about violent crime? There is a whole world of cultural, society, psychological and economic issues to factor into violent crime, and which makes it very hard to talk about as a single phenomenon. But we know from youth outreach workers, prison records, social services case files and so on that there are a few things that link perpetrators.

One of these is trauma. A majority of the prison population have been victims of sexual and/or domestic violence. They come from unstable backgrounds; they can have serious learning difficulties and/or mental health problems; many of them are dealing with addiction issues — directly or indirectly; they may have been kicked out of school; their parents may have been imprisoned; they may have grown up in poverty. When we are talking about youth crime, the children involved are being coerced by adults, and have legitimate day-to-day concerns for their own safety.

All the public hears about violent crime are headlines. It becomes very easy to see the world as being divided into good and bad people. We stop seeing the humanity in people, especially violent criminals. The first instinct is to lock them all up. But violence is a social problem, created by a violent and unequal society.

Take the fatal stabbing of a 15-year-old boy outside his school in Willesden in North West London in 2017, discussed on the Lockdown podcast ([bit.ly/2L4Ld0l](http://bit.ly/2L4Ld0l)). The media coverage of this profiled the perpetrator as a “monster” who must be punished. One journalist, to his credit, went to find the mother of the perpetrator who reported that he had gone through a series of awful, turbulent things in his life — most notably the deportation of his father. From that point she noticed a marked decline in his mental health. He began withdrawing, and misbehaving in school. Schools excluded him and he was put into a pupil referral unit, where he was being bullied and missed out on much of his education.

The mother went to a mental health service and begged them to do something for her son and her family. But this kid did not meet the threshold to be treated. The mother said: “if you don't help this family then either my child or someone else's will be dead in six months”. And she was not wrong. The brutal stabbing happened; another child will spend the formative period of his life in prison, and another is dead.

Labour talks about increasing use of stop and search. But a ten-year study compiled from Metropolitan Police data showed that stop and search has virtually no impact on violent crime. A 10% increase in stop and search would see perhaps a 0.1% decrease in violent crime. But stop and search is 10 times more likely to target black and minority ethnic youth. It is often humiliating; being stopped for no apparent reason implies your very existence is a threat to civil society.

You often hear the phrase “it takes a village to raise a child”. I think that's true. But what you will not hear is, “if a child doesn't have a place in a village it will burn it down to feel the warmth”. Stop and search breeds suspicion in the state that is often extended to social services or schools — the parts of the state that are better positioned to deal with things like youth violence.

Then there is the “gang taskforce” idea. In order to understand why this is a bad idea, we need to look at the deeply racialised nature of the word “gang”.

The UK has a database called the “gang matrix” which contains the details of 3,362 individuals who are suspected gang members. Of that number, 87% are from black or other minority ethnic groups. It seems that being in a gang mostly boils down to being black, enjoying drill music, having friends who have convictions, and behaving aggressively on social media. With the exception of being black, by those standards I would qualify as a gang member. Amnesty International UK described this as “stigmatising black youngsters and violating human rights”.

Gangs exist. When young people are caught up in them they are subject to horrific abuse and exploitation. But when the police get involved, they are almost completely ineffectual at dealing with gangs, because they treat small-time expendable members as criminals, rather than as the victims they actually are: people who need protection.

## GANGS

**Gangs exist. When young people are caught up in them they are subject to horrific abuse and exploitation.**

But when the police get involved, they are almost completely ineffectual at dealing with gangs, because they treat small-time expendable members as criminals, rather than as the victims they actually are: victims who need protection.

Please don't buy into the idea that violent crime is a black problem. The majority of knife crime happens in London. The majority of perpetrators in London happen to be black; that's because of the large population in London and the fact that there is a very high proportion of BME residents there. The BME communities who live in London also disproportionately live below the poverty line. So you can skew numbers to make this look like a black problem but it absolutely isn't. Class plays as much of a role in violent crime as race does, especially when we look at the national picture.

Class also plays a significant role in the way communities are policed. Just look at the way that ASBOs were used to criminalise large numbers of working-class youth. We know that the Home Counties won't be policed in the same way that poorer areas of Glasgow will be.

If the police are no help, then what might tackle violent crime? First we have to have hard arguments, and accept that there is no quick and easy solution. Tackling crime often means tackling inequality: and it can take generations for that approach to bear fruit. We also need to start looking at perpetrators of crime with compassion. These aren't evil people, demons, super-predators: most of the time, they are disturbed, scared, angry peo-



ple, who should have been helped before it got to a crisis point.

Early intervention programmes supporting disadvantaged parents with pre-school-aged children significantly reduce behavioural issues when those children reach secondary school age. Programmes working with children aged up to eight result in substantial benefits up to adulthood and see a reduction in crime. School plays an important role in crime prevention. There is a pronounced link between school exclusion and violent crime. Outreach work and after-school centres are also shown to have a positive effect in reducing crime, arrest rates and exclusion.

Social services need resources and funding so they can actually do family support work, and less crisis control. Mental health and trauma need to be worked on every day: these services can't just step in when the shit has hit the fan.

The drug trade fuels violence, but people are selling drugs because they need money. A lack of material resources and opportunities can also lead to feelings of alienation and hopelessness. That can fuel violence.

We need clean, safe social housing, we need a liveable unemployment benefit, we need a fully-functioning NHS that includes on-demand rehabilitation services.

We need to look at what is criminalised and in whose benefit it is criminalised. We should be for the legalisation of drugs. Not just because we are cool libertarians who are down with the sesh. But because until this happens, we will always be fighting a losing battle.

These are the kind of policy debates that we need to be having. They are a world away from the ones we're having at the moment. Instead what we have is self-proclaimed socialists calling for more police at the drop of a hat as if it is the only option on the table, rather than treating the police as the last resort.

**This is a betrayal of the working class and the BME communities that these politicians represent.**

• This is a transcript of Carrie's speech at Ideas for Freedom 2018. It is abridged; a longer version includes analysis of prisons and sentencing, and can be found online at: [bit.ly/2zNly9w](http://bit.ly/2zNly9w)



# Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break from "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
  - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
  - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
  - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
  - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
  - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
  - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
  - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
  - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!



## Events

### Monday 23 July

Labour for a People's Vote —  
London launch  
Central London  
[bit.ly/2uHuMmN](http://bit.ly/2uHuMmN)

### Wednesday 25 July

Liverpool Left Against Brexit  
7pm, Casa Bar, 29 Hope Street,  
Liverpool, L1 9BQ  
[bit.ly/2LnLKxr](http://bit.ly/2LnLKxr)

### Sunday 29 July

Socialist Feminist Reading  
Group: Caliban and the Witch  
Effra Social, 89 Effra Road, Brixton, SW2 1DF  
[bit.ly/2zTkKEG](http://bit.ly/2zTkKEG)

### 9-12 August

Workers' Liberty Summer Camp  
Height Gate Farm, Stoodley Glen  
[bit.ly/2zNCWjh](http://bit.ly/2zNCWjh)

### Sunday 19 August

Peterloo massacre 2018  
commemorative rally and picnic  
Manchester City Centre  
[bit.ly/2LeBrir](http://bit.ly/2LeBrir)

### 8-9 September

Student Activist Weekender  
10am, UCL, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT  
[bit.ly/2mm6BpY](http://bit.ly/2mm6BpY)

Have an event you want listing?  
Email: [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org) Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

# On Labour's new guidelines for dealing with antisemitism

## LABOUR

By Bill Davies

The Labour Party is right to engage with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) guidelines as a living document (something to be engaged with, discussed, analysed, interpreted and expanded upon), and indeed this is what it would appear was intended by the writers of the IHRA guidance.

It does not read as something intended to be a code of conduct, but rather as the basis for raising awareness and deepening understanding of modern antisemitism. Even the short 40-word definition (which is really the working definition according to the IHRA) is described within the guidance as "non-legally binding."

But Labour has nevertheless tried to make it into a Code of Conduct as well as, it seems, putting in place the foundations of what could be an educational campaigning effort.

## FACTIONS

Labour's document is based on the IHRA guidance plus a few points from the Chakrabarti report and some other sources.

However, the row now taking place can't be seen outside of the context of a factional battle between the Jewish Labour Movement on the one side and Jewish Voice for Labour on the other. Both sides appear to have lost sight of the content and purpose of the IHRA definition and guidance. They see it as an icon, a symbol which now has significance beyond what it actually says, either a sacred text to applaud and venerate or a source of evil to despise and condemn. For the JLM, the IHRA "full definition" is a symbol of taking antisemitism seriously. For JVL, it is part of an orchestrated attempt to restrict criticism of Israel and support for the Palestinians.

Labour has produced a document that confirms its adoption of the IHRA definition and basically reproduces the substantive points from the IHRA guidelines but with additional points and commentary.

JLM is determined to condemn this because they wanted Labour to adopt the exact wording of the IHRA guidelines, word for word. This has been the clear demand of the JLM, Jewish Leadership Council and Board of Deputies of British Jews. This condemnation is despite the fact that Labour's new guidelines are clearly based on the IHRA guidelines and include all the substantive points (except maybe one — see below). This could be called the Morecambe and Wise objection — the new guidance includes all the right points, but not necessarily



in the right order.

JVL welcomes Labour's new guidelines precisely because it's a departure from the exact wording of the IHRA guidelines, even though they know that they include the same content. They see them as providing more protection for free speech and the right to criticise Israel than the IHRA wording. More tactically, they also seem to welcome it because a) it comes from Corbyn's allies and they want to support Corbyn's leadership, and b) the opposition of the JLM has opened up the political space to allow them to give support.

## DEPARTURE

So both sides are now spinning the document to be a bigger departure from the IHRA guidelines than it really is in order to have a faction fight about something symbolic rather than something real.

It's probably the case that Jennie Formby, with the authority of Corbyn's closest advisers, made a deliberate decision to adopt the IHRA guidance in substance but not in appearance in order to offer something to both sides. Broad agreement with the approach of the IHRA guidelines but without simply signing up to the IHRA text and responding to concerns that it could be interpreted in such a way as to limit criticism of Israel.

It isn't true that four of the 11 examples have been left out. They have been addressed in different ways, some more thoroughly than others. The seven examples that are quoted directly from the IHRA guidelines are described by Labour's Code of Conduct as "likely to be regarded as antisemitic." This may seem to be an understatement when describing holocaust denial, for example, but it's a tougher standard than the IHRA guidelines which say that it

"could, taking into account the overall context," be an example of contemporary antisemitism.

Labour's guidelines go on to say: "The Party is clear that the Jewish people have the same right to self-determination as any other people. To deny that right is to treat the Jewish people unequally and is therefore a form of antisemitism."

"It is also wrong to accuse Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations."

"Chakrabarti recommended that Labour members should resist the use of Hitler, Nazi and Holocaust metaphors, distortions and comparisons in debates about Israel-Palestine in particular. In this sensitive area, such language carries a strong risk of being regarded as prejudicial or grossly detrimental to the Party within Clause 2.1.8."

These points effectively include three of the four IHRA examples that were not listed with the other seven. The one remaining example is "Applying double standards by requiring of [Israel] a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation."

This is addressed in a different way:

"It is not racist to assess the conduct of Israel — or indeed of any other particular state or government — against the requirements of international law or the standards of behaviour expected of democratic states (bearing in mind that these requirements and standards may themselves be contentious)."

This explanation of what "is not racist" leaves open whether or not it would be antisemitic to apply such a double standard, only noting that it is not racist if a fair and consistent standard is applied.

• Originally published on [clarionmag.org](http://clarionmag.org)



# Vote “yes” in PCS pay ballot

By a PCS member

**PCS, the largest civil service union, is in the middle of an industrial ballot on pay which is running from June 18 to July 23.**

Over 130,000 members of the union working for government departments and their agencies and responsible bodies have been balloted in the wake of the government’s refusal to lift the cap on pay or even enter into negotiations with the unions.

This is the first national statutory ballot PCS have run since the new 50% turnout threshold for union ballots came into force.

The decision to ballot on pay, voted on almost unanimously at the union’s conference in May follows a consultative ballot run which just fell short of the threshold, with 49% of members voting.

The significant turnout in the consultative ballot gave the union a mandate for a legal ballot, but unlike the consultative ballot online and regular updates of who had voted is not available to us during a statutory ballot.

Workers’ Liberty members in PCS welcomed the move to a statutory ballot, but were keen to make it clear that the ballot threshold presented a huge organisational challenge for the union, whose largest turnout in any previous statutory ballot had been 41%.

As with the successful CWU national ballot of posties last year, rank-and-file activists have built members meetings, social media activity and regular, local strike committees have been organised in cities to co-ordinate ballot work.

In some areas there are peculiarities which may prevent members from voting. A much-discredited four-year pay deal in the DWP (the union’s largest group) and supported by the union leadership has divided the workforce, with longer-standing employees getting 1.1%, but many getting 0.25% in exchange for much reduced terms and conditions while some new members are already getting 5%.

It’s clear that all members, regardless of their particular circumstances should vote for action. Least of all because division will only help the employer win on

other issues, but also if we lose the ballot, once the DWP deal finishes, there will be no more money for pay without a fight.

The release of the Cabinet Office guidance on pay last week without any consultation with the unions has also strengthened PCS’s hand. In an emergency meeting with the leaders of the big three civil service unions (PCS, FDA and Prospect) following the release of the guidance, the general secretaries of both FDA and Prospect told the Deputy Prime Minister they thought his behaviour was tantamount to de-recognition and demanded an immediate withdrawal.

Mike Clancy, the Prospect General Secretary, who is still reeling from his leadership being overturned at his conference by members demanding action on the cap, has publicly stated that he will support his members should they wish to take strike action against the cap.

**The next test will be whether PCS has reached the threshold on the 23 July. It could spell the resurgence or the death-knoll of opposition to the pay-cap by public sector workers.**

# Mixed outlook in DOO strikes

By a train driver

**RMT members are currently voting on a proposed settlement of their Driver-Only-Operation dispute at Greater Anglia that would see a second safety-critical member of staff (i.e. a conductor or guard) on all trains that currently run with one, with some of the operation of the train doors passing to the driver.**

Drivers at London North East Railway have also recently accepted an offer to operate the new "Azuma" trains currently being prepared for introduction. This agreement includes drivers releasing the doors on arrival at station stops, with the guards then taking

over and carrying out the remaining platform duties.

At Merseyrail, talks continue at ACAS behind closed doors, with no information being released as they progress.

At South Western Railway (formerly South West Trains), RMT has just announced a string of new strike dates on the 26, 28 and 31 July and 4, 11 and 18 August. According to the union, SWR have deliberately wrecked their talks with the union over DOO at ACAS.

Finally at Northern, the union has suspended its strike scheduled for 21 July after an apparent movement on the part of the company Arriva Rail North. For the first time, the union is reporting that the

company is now willing to engage in talks over the DOO dispute that include the option of keeping a second safety-critical member of staff on every Northern train.

That the company has made this concession is testament to the steadfastness of RMT members at the franchise, in the face of almost universal disregard for their picket lines by members of drivers’ union Aslef and a well-developed strategy of recruiting scab guards from the ranks of lower and middle management and back office staff.

**However, there is still a long way to go before a settlement is reached and given the aforementioned behaviour of SWR, any optimism must be cautious.**

# Eurostar strike over dangerous conditions

By Ollie Moore

**RMT members working for Eurostar will strike on 28 July.**

Station workers at the company’s St. Pancras terminal in central London say they have been forced to bear the brunt of “corporate failures” as the station’s small concourse has become increasingly overcrowded.

A union statement said: “The international terminal at St. Pancras has been reduced to chaos, with staff left to bear the brunt of public anger, following a spate of service problems that have dumped thousands of passengers on the cramped concourse at St Pancras as the season heads towards its sum-

mer peak. RMT has repeatedly demanded action to improve conditions but with nothing tangible coming from Eurostar there is no option but to strike.”

Elsewhere in the rail industry, a planned strike of drivers on London Underground’s Piccadilly Line, due to take place over 11-14 July, was called off after Tube bosses offered the RMT union a settlement.

The strike aimed to win higher staffing levels and an end to an authoritarian management culture. In the settlement, LU bosses have committed to ensuring staffing levels at Piccadilly Line train depots are at least 32 drivers more than the minimum level necessary for oper-

ating the line. Commitments were also given around changes to management culture. However, some activists have argued that the concessions do not go far enough, and that a solid strike, which seemed likely after a good turnout and large majorities for action in the ballot, could have won more. Days after the strike was called off, severe delays hit the line due to staff shortages, which union activists say highlights the understaffing.

**RMT members at Ruislip depot also struck from 12-15 July in a dispute over pay parity for fleet maintenance staff involved in train preparation. The union reported that the strike was “rock solid”.**

# Anti-academy strike



**A teacher from John Roan school in Greenwich, south London, spoke to Solidarity about their campaign against academisation.**

**National Union of Education (NEU) members have struck for six days and last week we were joined by the GMB.**

There was an amazing sense of unity and we were very proud to have teaching assistants, cleaners and other workers on the picket line with us teachers.

Our pickets are regularly about 50 strong — with lots of parent and community support — they’ve really become community pickets or community protests.

The order for academisation was issued on 12 June. It’s like an eviction notice — they want us to give up and people to leave. But we’re not leaving or giving up. We’re not going to be bullied. We have an NEU meeting tonight [17 July] and are going to discuss more strikes next term. It’s our action that has driven and energised the much broader campaign, which has many facets, and will continue to do that.

In terms of where things stand: thanks to our action and our campaign, John Roan will reopen in September as a local authority-run community school. No funding agreement has been signed, no TUPE meetings have taken place, no land has been handed over. The whole thing keeps getting pushed back.

We have a legal challenge coming in December, based on the nature of the Ofsted procedure and report which opened the door to academisation. When a school is judged to have serious weaknesses or require special measures, Ofsted does not allow the conclusion to be appealed!

Our legal team at the NEI have told us we have a strong legal challenge based on Judge McKenna’s ruling (Durand, July 2017). We are now pushing our Governors and the Local Authority to support the school and make the legal challenge on behalf of staff parents and their families.

The legal challenge is being backed by the NEU nationally. Last night [16 July] we lobbied the school’s board of governors to demand they sponsor the legal action. We don’t know the outcome yet.

Dominic Herrington, the regional schools commissioner bureaucrat for the South East and South London, has the power to quash the academisation order so

there is still everything to play for.

Obviously there won’t be strikes over the summer but we will continue the campaign in various ways and still very much need your support.

In terms of the wider issues, the problems posed by academisation, by our whole education system, could not be more stark. It’s been revealed that the highest suicide rate for young women is among primary school teachers. Meanwhile thousands of children are literally being disappeared from education system — “offrolled” in an attempt to boost results for the league tables.

For John Roan specifically, we are the oldest school in the country run for the wider community and not just the well off. This academisation violates a very long tradition.

University Schools Trust (UST), the proposed academy sponsor, is an organisation with a £700,000 deficit, with a £1.3 million hole in its pension fund, which brags in its Company House report about its use of agency staff to bring down costs. It’s made clear that it will have complete control over the school — the board of governors will become window dressing.

We have always argued that our school needs time to turn things around, and we now have an experience Head that we can work with to lead our school forward.

Does not allow for the judgement to be challenged it complaints to be lodged.

This month I’ve been involved in organising a speaker tour from with teachers from the strike in West Virginia and have been incredibly inspired by their struggle and story. They’ve taken anger and turned it into collective action, not let it collapse into pessimism or defeatism. On a smaller scale that’s what we’re doing at John Roan too and it’s what we need to do much more widely in our schools system.

**Faced by this situation, we really need to go for it.**

**How you can help**

- Write to Dominic Herrington calling for him to quash the John Roan academisation order and meet with parents’ and teachers’ representatives to discuss [rsc.sesl@education.gov.uk](mailto:rsc.sesl@education.gov.uk)
- Donate to and circulate the crowdfunder for the legal challenge [bit.ly/2KE2AYG](https://bit.ly/2KE2AYG)
- Send messages of support to [johnroannut@gmail.com](mailto:johnroannut@gmail.com) and [parentsforjohnroan@gmail.com](mailto:parentsforjohnroan@gmail.com)





# Solidarity

For a workers' government

No 475 18 July 2018

50p/£1

## Unions must oppose far right



By Keith Road

**While the 14 July mobilisation of anti-fascists to oppose the rally in support of former EDL leader Tommy Robinson was significantly better than that on 9 July, it was still smaller than that of Robinson's supporters.**

Some 5,000, many part of an organised far right gathered in Whitehall.

Around 3,000 anti-fascist marchers were initially split into two contingents, the majority meeting at the starting point organised by Stand Up to Racism. Others congregating near Waterloo were organised by London Anti-Fascists. The two groups merged on Parliament Street (the approach to Whitehall). However the police stopped the anti-fascists from getting anywhere near Robinson's rally.

The pro-Robinson rally was addressed by a rogues' gallery of the international far-right, including Geert Wilders by videolink. It was compared by former Nigel Farage special advisor and Breitbart London

editor Raheem Kassam.

The right-ward shifting UKIP had their leader Gerard Batten address the crowd. In a rambling speech that incorporated vicious anti-Muslim bigotry he also compared Tommy Robinson to Gandhi

and Nelson Mandela. Supporters of the right pan-European group Generation Identity and people declaring support for Trump mingled with an increasingly inebriated, overwhelmingly male crowd.

### Attacked by far right thugs

By an AWL supporter

**I and another comrade left the counter-protest when we felt things were winding down, and met other comrades for a drink.**

When we got to the pub our friends told us they had seen the final flurries of a serious attack on RMT members, including Senior Assistant General Secretary Steve Hedley in a pub nearby.

Shortly afterwards, a group of around eight men came round the corner, saw us and came towards us. They had been drinking and were looking for a fight. I learnt from our comrades that this was the same group they'd seen attacking RMT people.

Our group was a mix of men, women, young and old people, many of them Labour Party activists, and we were by no means prepared for a confrontation.

One of the "Free Tommy" lot grabbed a banner pole.

Miraculously, one of our number managed to wrestle it off him before he could do any damage. Very shortly afterwards the attackers retreated due to the simultaneous arrival of the main anti-fascist march and the police.

**The man with the pole got beaten by anti-fascists and then arrested. We are very lucky things didn't turn out much worse. We need to be more prepared.**

While the protest was ongoing a more serious attack occurred on a group of RMT members who had gone from the demo to a nearby pub. Several members, including Senior Assistant General Secretary Steve Hedley, were attacked with tables and glasses. Fortunately no one was seriously injured but it underlies the fact that the far right will seek to attack and intimidate the labour movement as part of their strategy.

Earlier in the day a bus was stopped by Parliament Sq and held up while far right thugs shouted, and waved placards and flags at the hijab-wearing bus driver.

The far right plan to hold these demonstrations every month until Tommy Robinson is released. Those demonstrations may dwindle in size but we should not rely on that happening. The far right have serious financial backing and the support of the international far right, including within the Trump administration.

The global connections of this movement are growing and have been bolstered by Trump and a

growing network of alt-right figures across Europe and the USA. The Middle East Forum a "counter-jihad" organisation based in the US and counted as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Centre has said it helped organise and funded both this demonstration and the 9 June.

The lessons for the labour movement and left are clear. We need to crank up our mobilisation and quickly. The turn-out on 14 July was still disappointing from many major unions; only a handful of local Labour Parties tried to mobilise.

Activists in the RMT committed its Annual General Meeting to mobilise members both against Trump and the far-right; we need that kind of commitment in every union, nationally and locally and in every Labour Party.

Senior union officials signing statements and letters is not enough.

**They must turn out members and provide political education on why the labour movement must oppose fascists when they take to the streets.**

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